

Westminster Conditional Use Permit Application
Supplemental Materials

Legal Description of Property:

RANDALL ADD TO NAKOMA ALL OF LOTS 6 THRU 14, BLK 35 ALSO THE SELY 10 FT OF VACATED ALLEY LYING NWLY OF & ADJACENT TO LOTS 8 THRU 14 & EXT 10 FT SWLY OF THE SWLY LINE OF LOT 8 & THE NELY 10 FT OF VACATED ALLEY LYING SWLY OF & ADJACENT OF LOT 8, THE SWLY 10 FT OF VACATED ALLEY LYING NELY OF & ADJACENT TO LOT 7 & THAT PART OF VACATED NAKOMA RD 43.5 FT IN WIDTH LYING SELY OF & ADJACENT TO LOTS 8 THRU 14 EXT SWLY 184 FT TO THE NE LINE OF LOT 7 FROM THE SELY EXT OF NELY LINE OF LOT 14

Notices:

Notice to Alder Yvette Figueroa Cole and the Crawford Marlborough Nakoma Neighborhood Association is including as Attachment 1. They both approved a waiver of the 30 day requirement for notification.

Description of Project:

Westminster Presbyterian Church is a two story, 29,000 square foot building located at the corner of Nakoma Road and Yuma Drive. The parking lot is located off of Yuma in the back of the building and includes 20 regular and 2 accessible spaces. There is a drop-off location on Yuma Drive, with a U Shaped drive and covered entrance area. There is limited on-street parking in front and on the side of the church on Nakoma Road and Yuma Drive.

We are proposing to lease 8,383 square feet of the lower level to a privately operated elementary school. The lower level consists of classrooms that were originally designed for used as a day care. Most recently this space housed an elementary school (Madinah Academy). Madinah Academy provided instruction to 60-70 students at the end of their tenure in the building and moved so that they could expand to a larger size.

See Attachment 2 for a lay-out of the space that will be utilized by the school, space will be shared by the school and the church, and space on the first floor that will be maintained for use by the church. The school will not use any of the main floor (second floor) space, with the exception of bathrooms if necessary to meet student needs, and the possible use of the front porch located on the upper level of the church.

The elementary school wishing to lease the property (Acton Academy Madison West) intends to open to students in January of 2023. However, it wishes to open offices and begin preparation beginning in September, 2022. The first year, student enrollment will

be limited to 7-12 students with an intention of growing up to 75 students over a five year period (the proposed lease limits attendance to 99). School hours will be from 8:00 am to 5:30 pm on weekdays and will operate 10.5 months per year. While church property does not have outside play area, they will walk students one block, down Cherokee Drive, to Nakoma Park. Attachment 3 provides a detailed description of the school and its purpose. The school will open with 2 full time and 1-3 part time staff. As the school grows, staffing will increase to a maximum of 8 teachers and administrative staff for a total of 10 spaces on any given day.

No physical or structural changes will take place in the Westminster building as a result of this lease. The lower level of the building is currently configured with classrooms and, as a result, no renovation will be required. No exterior changes will be required to house the school at our site, with the exception of an added school sign on the exterior door or outside the on the Nakoma Road secondary building entrance. The Nakoma Street entrance will serve as the primary entrance to the school's *administrative* offices, but as described below, this entrance will not be used for pick-up or drop-off.

We do not expect that this will have a noticeable impact on traffic in the area and only for a short period of drop off and pick-up each day. While the main entrance and signage to the school will be off Nakoma Road, all students will be dropped off at the Yuma Street entrance. Starting with 7-12 students in the first year will result in minimal additional traffic to the area. Even as the school increases to the ultimate enrollment of up to 75 students, this should not create any significant issues. The prior school at this location had about 70 students and this number was easily handled with pick-up and drop-off taking place in the U-shaped drop off area on the Yuma side of the street. We will have 20 spaces for bike parking near the same entrance. Teachers (up to 6-8 teachers once fully operational) will park in the church parking lot and during the week there are no issues with parking in this lot.

In summary, we do not expect that the expected school lease will have a noticeable impact on traffic or parking in the neighborhood. A school of similar size operated in the building for over 10 years with no neighborhood issues.



Acton Academy Madison West (“AAMW”) is a private elementary school with the mission of inspiring each child and parent who enters our doors to develop a calling that will change the world.

We promise that each child at our school will:

- Begin a Hero's Journey
- Learn to be a curious, independent, lifelong learner
- Cherish the arts, wonders of the physical world and the mysteries of life on Earth
- Develop a deep respect for economic, political and religious freedoms
- Discover his or her most precious gifts and learn to use them to solve difficult problems

History

Acton Academy (“Acton”) was founded by Jeff and Laura Sandefer in Austin, TX in 2009, and has been described as a one-room schoolhouse for the 21st century. While not a Montessori school, AAMW borrows from Montessori principles, by using mixed-age classrooms (“studios”), and allowing students (“learners” or “heroes”) to move freely about the studio rather than be tied to their desks. In addition, AAMW incorporates 21st century e-learning tools, immerses learners in real-world projects, and adheres to the Socratic method of instruction. Our learners don’t just memorize facts; they learn to learn, learn to do, and learn to be.

Acton has 240 affiliates around the world. Following a rigorous “audition” process, co-founders Brandon and Marisa Palmer were granted permission by Acton to purchase the trademark rights to Acton Academy Madison West in January 2022. Acton Academy Madison West is considered an Acton affiliate.

Outcomes

While the school does not believe standardized assessments are paramount, we do administer standardized tests at the beginning and end of the year to measure baseline data. Acton does not teach to the test. Students at legacy Acton Academies have advanced far faster than in traditional schools (averaging as much as three grade levels gained each year), despite the fact that many students came into Acton with poor standardized test scores.

Beyond standardized tests, quality is largely judged by students by comparing their “best work” to world-class examples or through public exhibitions where results are judged by the marketplace (e.g. Acton’s annual children’s business fair, or a play written and produced by Acton learners, etc.).

Acton Academy Madison West

Acton Academy Madison LLC

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Learning at Acton

Acton has been described as a “one-room schoolhouse for the 21st Century.” Acton uses the latest technology (e.g. Khan Academy, Dreambox, etc) in a self-paced, multi-age learning environment designed to foster goal-setting, responsibility, and teamwork. Acton students are empowered to thrive in a world that needs independent, motivated thinkers and learners.

We believe children learn best by doing. Whether it’s launching a startup business, creating a tidepool habitat, playing a musical instrument, painting a mosaic, or programming a robot, Acton students are building real-life skills in the classroom every day.

We believe the learning experience is much richer when the teacher (“Guide”) offers insightful questions rather than answers, and facilitates hands-on learning. Guides use the Socratic method, always responding to students’ questions with new questions. This exchange hones learners’ critical thinking skills and resourcefulness.

Acton Academy is “student led.” This means young people take ownership of their education and peer relationships. Acton students learn to think independently, take responsibility and embrace challenge. They are being prepared to bring their own unique genius to the world.

School Calendar, Schedule, and Enrollment

Acton runs on a 10.5-month school year. Acton Academy Madison West will launch January 2, 2023 with rolling admissions.

It is contemplated that the school day will begin at 8am every day, and end at 3:30pm. We would like to offer extended day programming until 5:30pm.

AAMW plans to start small with an initial studio of 7 – 10 learners, and would like to grow to ~72 learners over the next five years.

Management Team

Marisa Palmer, Co-Founder and Head of School: Marisa brings a specialization in innovative education to Acton Academy Madison West. She currently teaches the investment banking and securities analysis courses at UW-Madison. In 2020, she won the Wisconsin School of Business Educational Innovation Award and was named “Favorite Business Professors of the Class of 2020” by Poets & Quants magazine. Prior to working at UW, Marisa spearheaded the creation of GLG University for Gerson Lehrman Group (GLG) in New York. Prior to that, she led the Americas region for Adkins, Matchett & Toy, a London-based training firm serving bulge-bracket investment banks and private equity firms.

Marisa spent ten years on Wall Street at Lehman Brothers and at the hedge fund, Tudor Investment Corporation. She earned an MBA from Columbia Business School and a BS in Economics and Political Science from UW-Madison, where she was also co-captain of the women’s varsity volleyball team.

Brandon Palmer, Co-Founder: Brandon brings critical start-up and operational experience to Acton Academy Madison West. He has worked in start-ups throughout his 25-year career. Most notably he served as CIO, scaling Global Brokerage, Inc. (formerly FXCM) from start-up to IPO over nine years. He launched his own business, FXColo which he ran for ten years, before exiting through a sale of the company two years ago. Today, he has been key to the growth of VC-backed Redox, Inc. where he heads up network architecture and helped develop their patented queueing technology.

Marisa and Brandon have a five-year old son who will attend Acton Academy Madison West. For more information, below are links to their LinkedIn profiles:

- Marisa Palmer: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/marisamackeypalmer/>
- Brandon Palmer: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bpalmernyc/>

What Others Are Saying:

“Montessori meets Silicon Valley”

- *Reason Magazine, January 2018*

“Acton Academy is one of the most important education developments in the world.”

- *Tom Vander Ark, CEO of Getting Smart, former Executive Director of Education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

“Acton Academy is on the leading edge of what it means to give students agency of their own learning.”

- *Sal Khan, Founder of Khan Academy*

“Agency may be the one most important factor in human happiness and well-being.”

- *William Stixrud, Ned Johnson, authors of The Self-Driven Child: The Sciences and Sense of Giving Your Kids More Control Over Their Lives*

“I’ve visited hundreds of innovative models of schooling over the past decade, and Acton continues to be one of the most promising models..... Acton is a truly inspiring and exceptional school.”

- *Bernard Bull, Associate Professor of Education at Concordia University Wisconsin, author of Etale – Education, Innovation, and Experimentation*

“We had escaped the trap of obsessing about homework, PTA policies, and grades on tests. Like freeing birds from cages, we were loosening our grip on our children and they were learning to fly.”

- *Laura Sandefer, author of Courage to Grow: How Acton Academy Turns Learning Upside Down*

“Acton Academy is on the vanguard of change in education in our country. After reading [*Courage to Grow*], your first two questions will probably be, ‘Why couldn’t my school be like this?’ and ‘How can I send my kids to Acton?’ This is an important story about learning what matters.”

- *Seth Godin, author of Stop Stealing Dreams*

News and Resources:

Acton Academy Madison West website:

<https://www.actonmadison.com/>

TedX Talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDkm7gux-0k>

EdSurge:

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2013-11-20-when-edtech-meets-montessori-kids-rule-edtech>

Forbes:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kerrymcdonald/2021/12/04/rising-demand-for-learner-driven-education-spurs-acton-academy-growth/?sh=2352a6bf6082>

Inc. Magazine:

<https://www.inc.com/magazine/201703/tom-foster/kids-inc-entrepreneurship-training.html>

EdSurge:

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2014-05-23-10-things-that-will-surprise-you-if-you-put-kids-in-charge>

Acton Academy Austin Elementary School Blog:

<https://sites.google.com/a/actonacademy.org/es-site/>

Acton Academy Parents Blog:

<https://www.actonacademyparents.com/>

Recent Press and Podcasts:

<https://www.actonacademyparents.com/press/>